

*[Translation]***New Procedure for Assessment of Inflation**

658. SHRI ANAND RATAN MAURYA:

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to change the procedure of assessing the rate of inflation keeping in view of this fact that the present procedure to calculate the rate of price rise on the basis of wholesale price index has become impracticable;

(b) if so, whether any expert group has been constituted to examine the issue;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the time by which the final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) to (d) Ministry of Industry, Department of Industrial Development vide notification dated 18th June, 1993 set up a working Group under the Chairmanship of Prof. Y.K. Alagh, the then Vice-Chancellor, Jawahar Lal Nehru University, to update the existing series of wholesale Price Index with base 1981-82 so as to reflect structural changes in the Indian Economy since 1981-82. After Prof. Y.K. Alagh joined the Union Government, Prof. S.R. Hashim, Member, Planning Commission was appointed as the Chairman of the Working Group with effect from 2.9.1996. It is hoped that the expert group may be able to complete its analytical work by the end of the current year.

Voting Percentage

659. SHRI HANSRAJ AHIR: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the law percentage of voting in general elections in the country;

(b) if so, whether the Government are contemplating to enact any law for casting vote compulsory;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the steps being taken by the Government to increase the percentage of voting?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) The percentage of voting in general elections to Lok Sabha held in 1989, 1991 and 1996 was 61.95, 56.73 and 57.94, respectively. The Election Commission of India is of the view that compared to international standards and percentage of voting in certain other democratic countries, the percentage of voting in India is good.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) The Election Commission has, however, launched a National Voter Awareness Campaign since 1994, the main purpose of which is to improve the general awareness about the importance of the right of franchise and its free and fair exercise.

*[English]***Royalty of Coal**

660. DR. RAMKRISHNA KUSMARIA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of coal extracted from various coal mines in Madhya Pradesh during 1995-96 and 1996-97;

(b) the amount of royalty given to the Madhya Pradesh Government and the rate thereof; and

(c) the amount of royalty being given to the Bihar Government on coal production during the above period and the rates thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): The coal produced from various coal mines in Madhya Pradesh during 1995-96 and 1996-97 are as under:-

| (million tonnes) | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1995-96 | 1996-97 (Provisional) |
| 79.76 | 83.28 |

(b) and (c) The amount of royalty paid to the State Governments of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar and the rates thereof are as under:

| (Rs. crores) | | |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| | 1995-96 | 1996-97 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 666.77 | 864.14 |
| Bihar | 658.33 | 682.77 |

The rates of royalty of various grades of coal as revised with effect from 11.10.94 are as under:-

| Coal Group | Royalty rates w.e.f. 11.10.94 (Rs. per tonne) |
|--------------------|---|
| 1 | 2 |
| Group-I | |
| (Coking Coal Steel | |
| Gr-I, II, Washery | |
| Gr-I) | 195.00 |

| 1 | 2 |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Group-II | |
| (Coking Coal WG II, | |
| III, Semi Coking I, | |
| II, Non-Coking A.B) | 135.00 |
| Group-III | |
| (Coking Coal WG IV, * | |
| Non-Coking C) | 95.00 |
| Group-IV | |
| (Non-Coking D,E,) | 70.00 |
| Group-V | |
| (Non-Coking F,G) | 50.00 |
| Group-VI | |
| (Andhra Pradesh Coal) | 75.00 |

Policy for Paper Industry

661. SHRI G.A. CHARAN REDDY: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have urged the paper industry to consider strategic alliances amongst domestic paper mills to market their products so as to bring down the delivery costs, avoiding costly and criss-cross transportation;

(b) whether the Government are considering for evolving a suitable policy framework to make available adequate raw material at reasonable price to the paper industry;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the extent to which the said policy is likely to help the paper industry?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) High cost of production is the single most limiting factor affecting the competitiveness of indigenous paper industry. Government has advised the industry to consider all cost cutting options including strategic alliances to transport and market their products.

(b) to (d) There is no shortage of non conventional raw materials like agro based residues and waste paper. However, large scale industry led plantation would be an ideal and cost effective solution for ensuring regular supply and for generating rural employment.

SBI Signed Mou with Egypt

662. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Bank of India have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Egypt's Social Fund for Development; and

(b) if so, the details of the MOU?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) State Bank of India (SBI) had signed an MOU with Social Fund for Development (SFD), Egypt. Under this MOU, SBI will provide technical assistance to SFD in the following areas:

development of efficient credit delivery mechanisms, through banking channels, in Egypt, for weaker sections of the society.

building up suitable training infrastructure and initial training of Egyptian-bank staff in the required skills.

Until now three training workshops of five days each have been conducted by SBI in Egypt and a two-week training programme on rural and developmental banking has been conducted at the State Bank Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad for staff of the commercial banks in Egypt through the aegis of SFD.

Soiled Currency Notes in Karnataka

663. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether soiled and mutilated currency notes of Rs. 1, Rs. 2 and Rs. 5 are in great circulation in Karnataka;

(b) if so, whether these soiled notes are not being accepted by nationalised banks in the State;

(c) if so, whether the Reserve Bank has taken any action to provide coins to replace soiled notes;

(d) if so, the time by which the coins are likely to be supplied to banks in the State to replace soiled notes; and

(e) the estimated value of Rs. 1, 2, and 5 denomination soiled notes in Karnataka?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) No, Sir. With the discontinuance of printing of smaller denomination notes of Re. 1, Rs. 2 and Rs. 5, and with the withdrawal of unfit notes, the quantum of these notes in circulation has come down.

(b) All the banks are under instructions to freely accept soiled notes of these smaller denominations for exchange. The currency chests maintaining branches have also been delegated with powers under RBI Note Refund rules to adjudicate claims on mutilated notes free of cost. Complaints received from the general public in this regard are also attended to.

(c) and (d) With the Government's decision to discon-